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ABSTRACT

This practicum sought to understand why students in a Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT) program did not see the need to earn good grades or to complete their high school education. One hundred DCT programs were surveyed statewide, and it was found that 66 percent reported problems with attendance, 35 percent revealed problems with student attitudes, and 35 percent stated that some students were classified as at-risk. A program was then implemented for ninth- through twelfth-grade DCT students who were identified as at-risk by the full service school team. The solution incorporated community leaders and employers as mentors. Students met with their mentors each week and participated in planned activities. The students' performance was then measured by comparing fall semester grades with spring semester grades following program implementation. Students' grades increased. They failed fewer courses and their time on task increased as a result of better attendance. Nine appendices include charts which compare grades, attendance, and the total students completing the twelfth grade for successful graduation. Many students also attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, social functions, or other types of business interactions as guests of their mentors. The recommendation is that mentors and at-risk teams be used to improve students' attendance and academic performance. (RJM)

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REDUCING THE HIGH SCHOOL DCT COOPERATIVE EDUCATION DROP OUT RATE THROUGH AN EMPLOYER/STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM AND AT-RISK TEAMS

by

Mary A. Cragar

A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Educational Specialist

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference

June 1994

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Abstract

Reducing the High School Cooperative Education Drop Out Rate Through an Employer/Student Mentor Program and At-Risk Teams.
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Descriptors: Reducing the Drop Out Rate/Cooperative Education/ Employer/Student Mentor Program/At-Risk Teams/Cooperative Education Mentors/Students in the Work Place

This project was developed and implemented to use community leaders and employers as one-on-one mentors to increase student attendance and academic achievement. Poor performance and low GPAs of the DCT students made them into potential dropouts as their predecessors before them. The solution strategy used community leaders and employers as mentors and the full-service school as at-risk teams to monitor grades and attendance. Students met with their mentors each week and participated in planned activities. Increased student performance was measured by comparing the fall semester grades with the spring semester grades after implementation. Grade point averages increased, fewer courses were failed, and time on task was increased as a result of better attendance. Success was achieved. Appendices include charts showing the comparison of GPAs, attendance, and the total students completing the 12th grade year for successful graduation.

Authorship Statement/Document Release

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Mary A. Crogan
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Practicum Title REDUCING THE HIGH SCHOOL DCT COOPERATIVE EDUCATION DROP OUT RATE THROUGH AN EMPLOYER/STUDENT MENTOR PROGRAM AND AT RISK TEAMS

Student's Name MARY A. CRAGAR

Project Site SEMINOLE HIGH SCHOOL Date JUNE 1, 1994

Observer's Name VERNA P. JACKSON Verna P. Jackson
please print *please sign*

Observer's position ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL Phone # (407) 322-4352 X104

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

The use of mentors provided by the Greater Sanford Chamber of Commerce has improved the attendance rate and the grade point average of the DCT students.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The setting for this practicum took place in a ninth through twelfth grade high school located in central Florida. The community which the school served was suburban with a small town atmosphere and had a population of approximately 34,000 people: 63 percent White; 34 percent Black; the remaining 3 percent were Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian. The community serving the school contained the highest number of minorities in the school district. The major industries of the area were agriculture and light manufacturing. The socio-economic status of the majority of the population was upper-middle class to poor. The cost of housing in the community ranged from multimillion dollar homes to low-cost public housing projects. Four public housing projects were located within the attendance zone of the school. Twenty-three percent of the families within the school zone had incomes below the poverty level. More than 85 percent of the students attending the school were transported by school district operated busses. Two traditional middle schools and one

alternative school of choice fed ninth graders into the school.

The school had a student population of 1,769. Fifty-five percent of the students were White, 40 percent were Black, and the remaining 5 percent were Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian. Forty-four percent of the students who were attending the high school received free or reduced price lunch. This figure indicated that of the 1,769 students attending the school, 775 lived with families with incomes at or below the poverty level.

DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS

	Number	School%	District%	State%
White	974	55.05	77.11	62.08
Black	704	39.79	12.03	22.05
Hispanic	61	03.44	08.10	13.64
Asian	26	01.46	02.64	02.05
Indian	04	00.22	00.12	00.18

Fifteen percent of the students were enrolled in special education courses. Those courses included those for the gifted students, moderately/severely handicapped students, and mildly handicapped students. There were no

programs offered for limited English proficient students at this site. The mission statement of the school was: Students who graduate from this High School shall be prepared to begin a career and continue their education at a post-secondary technical school, community college, or university. Since the adoption of this mission statement, the School Advisory Council and the strategic planning committee have made major changes in the school. The Blueprint for Career Preparation model has been implemented and has created varied teaching and delivery strategies by the faculty. Two Tech Prep programs have been developed with applied academic classes, and the Health Occupations Magnet Program has completed the first year of implementation, which offered a three-tiered career path for students to choose from. The school offered additional vocational technical programs in child care, auto mechanics, drafting, auto body repair, construction, business, and health care. An electricity course component was added and an apprenticeship program in carpentry has been developed. The School Board and the Academy of Construction Trades has formed a partnership to implement an apprenticeship program in the building trades. Cooperative education opportunities and

on-the-job training, both for the general school population and the exceptional education students, has been available.

ENROLLMENT IN JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS

	General Population	Special Education
On-the-Job Training (OJT)	60	17
Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT)	40	-
Work Experience (WE)	27	-
Cooperative Diversified Training (CDE)	50	-
Job Education Training (JET)	-	16

A School Resource Center was provided through a Full Service School Grant, and a family center and counseling facility will be developed for implementation. A referral system has been in place using itinerant counselors, who were a part of a Full Service School Project, to identify at-risk students and provide them with tutoring, personal and academic counseling, and job application and interview skills. The school identified goals two, three, four, five, and six of the Blueprint

2000 state goals as priorities of the School Improvement plan and targeted specifically the goals of increased graduation rates and articulated programs for the school-to-work transition for the non-college bound student.

The practicum author has a Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT) Program at the school site and has been a coordinator for six years. The author instructed all DCT students and coordinated the on-the-job training with participating community employers. The target students were 12th grade DCT students who worked in part-time positions approximately 20 to 30 hours per week in the on-the-job-training component. The DCT program was offered as a part of the school's curriculum to help students develop work ethics, develop positive work attitudes, and to gain valuable occupational skills for school to work transition. The vocational student organization, Cooperative Education Clubs of Florida, provided enrichment activities, competitive events, and valuable leadership and public speaking opportunities for the target group. This high school had the highest number of minorities in the district and had four public housing projects located within the zones of the school. Many of these students were at-risk because of the

following characteristics: chronic school attendance and truancy problems; problems; delinquent behavior; teenage parent; two or more years behind their peers in reading or mathematics; victims of family trauma; victims of ethnic, economic, or cultural disadvantage. The DCT students at the school site, who were identified as at-risk students by the Full-Service school team were the target group in this practicum study of increasing the academic success of DCT students by using various motivators and intervening methods to increase attendance and to produce a higher GPA.

Problem Statement

Many of the DCT students did not see the need to get good grades or to complete their high school education. Although the practicum site school had a dropout prevention program in place, the increased numbers of at-risk students could not all be served in that program.

On a questionnaire constructed by the practicum author surveying 100 DCT Programs in Florida (Appendix A:43), 66 percent stated that attendance was a major issue, while 35 percent stated that attitude was a common problem. Furthermore, 35 percent stated that they had students that were classified as at-risk, or drop-out

prevention, or students with no career goals due to lack of overall academic success. At the author's site school, 16 students out of 40 students (40 percent) were at-risk.

When questioned about placing students in on-the-job training sites, 25 percent of those surveyed stated that employers were unwilling to place students in jobs who did not have high-tech skills or training needed for placement. Approximately one-third reported some use of all-school computer labs or having some computers in classrooms for use in teaching computer skills, and 30 percent of the responses indicated that they had some articulation or coordination with interdisciplinary learning or apprenticeship programs. When questioned about the dropout rate of the DCT students, 7.8 percent was the average percentage of students who did not complete the program, but the range reported was from a low of 1 percent to a high of 38 percent across the state. The average classroom size reported was 21 students, but the range indicated in the survey was from a high of 38 students in the classroom to a low of 14 students. Sixty percent reported that at least one student had received the Florida Gold Seal Scholarship

Award for program completion and an overall GPA average of 3.0; however, 40 percent reported that no students had qualified for the Gold Seal due to lack of 3.0 GPA average and that even meeting the 1.5 GPA in order to graduate was a cause for concern.

The Diversified Cooperative Training (DCT) Cooperative Education, a component of vocational education which uses a combination delivery system of academic classes and on-the-job training has been an integral part of Florida schools since the 1960's and has served a variety of students. The Florida Department of Education statistics (Appendix B:45) show that 52,752 students were enrolled in diversified programs across the state and that 21,000 students withdrew during the year without completing the program. The responses to the practicum author's survey, as well as the Florida Department of Education statistics, clearly indicate that many of those students could be in the at-risk category.

At the practicum site school the dropout rate in the DCT Program for the 1992-1993 school year was 33.4 percent which was 25.6 percent higher than the average dropout rate reported by responses to the questionnaire (Appendix A:43) that surveyed 100 DCT programs in

Florida. The target students enrolled in the DCT programs at the site school were identified as being at risk and would most likely continue the pattern of their predecessors in dropping out of school. The percentage of students not completing the DCT program over the last three years has increased, with a high increase of students not completing in the past year.

STUDENT DROP OUTS OF DCT PROGRAM

YEAR	Students Enrolled	Students Leaving	%
1990-1991	45	5	12.0
1991-1992	44	6	13.7
1992-1993	45	15	33.4

In order to assist the target students in preparing for further education or employment, this practicum author developed an intervention strategy that improved the target students DCT completion rate by 50 percent.

Objectives

The target group for this practicum was the DCT students who were identified as at-risk by the full service school team. The following objectives were for

the target group to achieve by the end of the implementation period:

1. After 12 weeks of participation in the targeted one-on-one employer/student mentor program with at-risk teams, the student completion rate will be increased by 50 percent so that 100 percent of the target students will complete their DCT training. This objective was measured by comparing completion data for DCT students for the 1992-1993 school year to completion data for DCT students in the 1993-1994 school year.

2. Fifty percent of the target students will improve their grade point average by 5 percent or more by improving grades in one or more classes so that 80 percent of the target group has a 2.0 grade point average and a C or higher in all academic and DCT classes. This objective was measured by a comparison of the target students' grades on the report cards for the grading period prior to implementation and target students' grades and grade point average on the report cards at the end of the implementation period. The criteria used to determine a C grade was an average of 75 percent.

3. Fifty percent of the target students will improve

their attendance rates by 100 percent so that 80 percent of the target students will attend school regularly and will miss no more than two days during the 12-week implementation period. This objective was measured by compiling pre- and post-attendance data.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

In reviewing the research regarding the poor academic achiever and the student who drops out of school in DCT Cooperative Education, the author reviewed several types of research models and literature in the areas of cooperative education programs as well as vocational education programs already implemented in a variety of situations similar to the site school. The author found that the strategies for this problem centered around three main areas:

1. Identifying at-risk students.
2. Integrating academics into vocational education.
3. Increasing motivation with incentives.

In addition, the author researched critical thinking skills as a mechanism to help solve these problems.

Does vocational education decrease the dropout rate? Research supports the fact that "occupationally specific education can benefit students from disadvantaged backgrounds by persuading them to stay in school long enough to graduate." (Bishop (1988:5) The

findings in this study reported that vocational students who stay in school and earn a high school diploma may raise their earning power by as much as 40 percent.

Irvine (1988) indicates that since 1960 cooperative education has been one of the major curriculum alternatives in American education at both the secondary and postsecondary levels. He states that cooperative education has been found to be beneficial to students, schools, and cooperating organizations alike, and it helps many students to perceive connections between the jobs they hold and the material they are taught at school. The article further explains that cooperative education helps students develop a greater dependence upon their own judgments, improves their human relation skills, and reduces the number of dropouts.

The writer interviewed several teachers from cooperative education programs to research how this problem was being addressed at their schools. One instructor stated that the DCT cooperative education program was currently the strategy used by guidance for placement of students who cannot cope with regular school programs because of a number of school-related problems and that many of these students had no related

career objectives other than to take a job during part of the school day. (McCready, 1994).

Identifying At-Risk Students

The fact that vocational education serves at-risk students is not news in the educational field. The study documented by the North Carolina State Department of Education (1989) to study the effectiveness of vocational education for at-risk students states that the at-risk students served by vocational education include academically disadvantaged students, dropouts, students with limited English proficiency, pregnant teens, single parents, migrants, economically disadvantaged students, handicapped students, and potential dropouts. In this research the Department stresses that vocational education is a factor which contributes to dropout prevention. The following quote explains:

> Special co-op programs are provided to help ease the transition from school to work and to help students develop work ethics and positive work attitudes. This program is provided for students who cannot participate in the cooperative strategies provided through regular vocational programs. Special vocational programs are designed for at-risk students who cannot succeed in the regular vocational environment even with support

> services. Smaller class size, extensive hands-on activities, modified curriculums,and simulated job tasks are characteristics of these special programs. (North Carolina State Dept. of Public Instruction, 1989:15).

Deutschman (1992:86) reports that "kids are tomorrow's labor force or tomorrow's social problems." He states, "One reason for the nation's 29 percent high school dropout rate is that young people don't see a clear connection between what they're supposed to learn in class and what they'll need to succeed in a career." (Deutschman, 1992:86) His article suggests that kids do not know enough about the world of work to even inspire them to try harder in school. He further states that aside from their teachers, the only working adults that children get to know are their parents and that in some underclass families, no one works; and in certain neighborhoods, some of the visible adults are not even engaged in legal occupations.

In reporting from Fortune's Fifth Annual Education Summit in Washington, D.C., Education Secretary Lamar Alexander, as cited by Perry (1992:132) says, "You cannot talk about achieving 90 percent graduation rate without talking about parents who check on homework and turn off the television and know where their kids are."

Perry continues with the idea that the reality of the late 20th century American family is that many children grow up in single-parent households and in homes ravaged by drinking or drugs. Perry (1992:132) further stated that in studies tracking young people who had successfully overcome great odds, "The one thing they all had in common: a one-to-one connection with a caring adult."

Through additional research, the writer found several common descriptors for identifying potential dropouts that are enrolled in vocational programs. Alpern (1991) believes that one of the major strategies to incorporate into vocational education is an integrated occupational approach. Alpern's research centers upon a program which is being developed and implemented in Alberta, Canada. The researcher indicates that a major emphasis of the program is to develop students' self esteem and then to work with positive attitudes and generic skills necessary for successful entry into the workplace. (Alpern, 1991) He also reports that many at-risk students come from single-parent homes and from families with low socio-economic status. This program is being developed and implemented

by the Alberta Department of Education to meet the needs of students who are identified as being at-risk and unable to cope with a regular program. A major strategy of the program is its emphasis on finding the students who are identified with the characteristics listed below for "at-risk" students: (Cohen, as cited by Alpern, 1991:5)

1. Two or more years behind the grade level of their peers in reading and mathematics skills.
2. Chronic attendance and truancy problems.
3. Delinquent behavior.
4. Victims of personal and/or family alcohol or drug abuse.
5. Victims of family trauma, such as death, divorce,violence, separation, and/or unemployment.
6. Victims of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
7. Victims of ethnic, economic, or cultural disadvantage.

In a research study done in Michigan about Hispanic school dropouts and low academic achievement, it was concluded that the "dropouts reported a lack of emotional involvement in school and a 'laid-back' approach to learning." (Michigan State Board of

Education, 1986:14). Although this study was concentrated on Hispanic student dropouts, the study concluded "that almost three-fourths (71 percent) of those who prematurely left school had grade point averages of 1.5 or below and 87 percent of them were enrolled in general education curricula." (Michigan State Board of Education, 1986:14). Major findings of this study indicate that the reasons listed for leaving school were having problems with school discipline, not believing that a diploma is important for getting a job, school absenteeism, getting married, feeling that classes were boring or irrelevant, and school attitudes. The study states that "dropouts are much more likely than graduates to have repeated grades through their educational careers and to have failing grades at the junior high school level." (Michigan State Board of Education, 1986:32)

The writer was particularly interested in what Bishop (1988:21) reported in answer to the question, "Can basic skills substitute for occupational skills?" Bishop (1988:22) concluded that "large improvement job knowledge are easier to achieve than equivalent improvements in basic skills." While basic skills are

important, the research suggests that basic skills are not a substitute for skills that are specific to a job or occupation and that studying occupationally specific skills does not necessarily lower achievement in academic areas. Bishop (1988:24) concludes that "students who have done poorly in academic courses in 9th and 10th grade are more likely to choose vocational courses in the 11th and 12th grade."

Integrating Academics Into Vocational Education

The concerns regarding education for a productive role in society were addressed at The Public Hearing on Education and Work (1982). Testimony was given by the public, experts, vocational educators, secondary school managers, community college and university administrators, and employers. In this hearing topics included: the academic environment and employment trends; academic changes and skills needed by youth in a technological society; the need for new curriculum materials and training; the retraining of education personnel; and the impact that education has on the economy and business. The conclusions of this hearing documented that there were major weaknesses in the

overall educational system and that some employers viewed high school graduates as being unprepared for the work force.

Educational reform in the 1990's comes from the idea that something is wrong with public schools. Choices must be made to take academic courses or vocational programs and yet the occupational focus of the high school is often hidden. Grubb (1993:26) states that "enrollments in traditional vocational education are dwindling, and graduation requirements continue to emphasize academics." He lists three major ways to reshape the high school for the next century:

> 1. The Academy Model. Academies usually operate as schools within schools with integrated curriculum.
>
> 2. Occupational Clusters. Each student takes vocational and academic courses within a cluster. Schools prepare students to choose between clusters and to elect their career paths.
>
> 3. Magnet Schools. Schools that have an occupational focus and teachers can emphasize applications in that occupational area.

Grubb (1993:27) states that these initiatives can "replace the 'shopping mall high school' with schools that are more focused and impose some coherence on the

high school curriculum." Grubb (1993) indicates that the above methods will improve the teaching of all subjects, will reduce tracking and segregation of students, will strengthen career guidance, and will provide a vision for business participation.

Campbell (1992) suggests linking cooperative education with apprenticeship to prepare people for employment. He states that "most cooperative education students are employed on one of the more than 700 occupations recognized by U.S. Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT)." (Campbell, 1992:41) This strategy would integrate academics through the use of technology and business applications to create realistic experiences and hands-on involvement.

Glass (1993) also suggests that apprenticeship programs may be the key to helping students who are bound for the work force. He states:

> Many of today's noncollege-bound high school graduates flounder from one low-paying skill job to another...Our economy is being damaged and more importantly, young lives are being damaged by our collective failure to help our young people make a smoother transition from school to work. (Glass, 1993:6)

Glass (1993) suggests that an integrated curriculum with a combination of school-based and work-based learning,

which integrates academic, technical, and occupational education, plus the active involvement of targeted businesses and employers, are factors needed to launch projects such as the Project ProTech, a youth apprenticeship program at three Boston High Schools that prepares students for careers in the health care field, and the Pennsylvania Youth Apprenticeship Program in which 76 Pennsylvania employers participate in training new recruits for jobs in the metal working industry. Glass (1993) further advocates that the federal government (Clinton) will play a leading role in encouraging business participation in apprenticeship programs and setting industrywide standards to guide the programs. How does integration of academic content into existing programs begin? Joyner and Giovannini (1992) suggest that some guidelines to develop a strategic plan would be: identify academic courses, English, Math, Social Studies; use teams of teachers from academic and vocational courses; Create "schools within schools" where teachers have the same students and integrate curriculum; learn from employers what job skills are needed; restructure general courses so the real world is used; and align academic and vocational curricula.

Increasing Motivation With Incentives

In researching the at-risk student in vocational education, the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction (1989) developed the following strategies to keep these students in school:

1. Job placement services to ease the transition from school to work.

2. Program for pregnant teens to help them continue their vocational program.

3. Support program for single parents providing specialized instruction and counseling to encourage them to remain in school and continue their vocational program.

4. Outreach services to ensure that students are informed of the vocational opportunities available at the high school level.

5. Volunteers to serve as mentors, tutors, guest speakers, counselors and teacher assistants.

The Department believes that it is important that "schools find a way to motivate 'at-risk' students--those who have recorded poor grades, attendance, behaviors, or social skills and who are likely to drop out at age 16." (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, 1989:23). The programs targeted specifically to the at-risk students included the following implementation strategies: incentives and rewards (such as fast food

coupons, school supplies, and field trips), tutoring, self-esteem building efforts, role models and mentors, parental communication and parental involvement, teaching preemployability skills, integration of basic skills and vocational instruction, and job placement and counseling services. The Michigan State Board of Education (1986) supports the above-listed strategies of tutoring, enrichment, counseling, and job placement services for the dropout-prone youth and their families.

Bishop (1988) suggests that vocational school leavers may be at a disadvantage and that:

> school personnel can help students see the value of acquiring a strong foundation of basic and occupation skills; emphasize the connections between school performance and job success; improve communication with employers to maximize performance rewards; motivate students through a strong school reward structure; publish a Competency Profile system that recognizes the student's growing competence and signals his/her accomplishments to parent and employers; expand cooperative education; teach students how to market themselves and aid them in the marketing effort; help employers get information about students. (Bishop, 1988:46)

Bishop (1988) further states that students often take occupational courses without having real plans to pursue a related occupation or are there to avoid more difficult academic subjects or to get permission to take

a job during part of the school day or to use the course as exploration and that poor career guidance is a contributing factor to the above items. He states that "employers can help by recruiting cooperative education students for part-time jobs and investing heavily in training them." (Bishop, 1988:46) His recommendations also include: a well-informed career choice should precede entry into occupational training; that basic skills not be neglected; and occupational training should be offered only in demand occupations with the participating community and industry businesses. (Bishop, 1988)

Grubb (1993:26) states that "most adolescents seem not to understand how schooling decisions affect their future careers. There may be no one to tell them, since counseling departments in many high schools are seriously understaffed." Grubb suggests that programs such as mentoring, internships, shadowing, selecting a "major" in the 9th or 10th grade, selecting a "career path" with a cluster of integrated instruction, and using cooperative education to link education to the workplace provides information about occupations and added motivation.

Manning and Curtis (1988) have devised a multimedia, mutimethod instructional text for teaching transferrable and critical thinking skills with an integrated curriculum approach. This material enhances the teaching of leadership skills, participative management, group membership roles, group dynamics, and problem solving techniques. Through the use of these materials, valuable characteristics can be taught and self esteem gained in all areas of the integrated approach. Hughes and Latto, as cited by Alpern (1991) confirmed previous findings regarding the importance of transferable skill development as a major focus of effective programs. When asked for the skills to be a successful employee, employers listed the following skills in order of priority:

1. Communication skills
2. Language skills
3. Reasoning and problem solving skills
4. The ability to develop and maintain positive interpersonal relationships.
5. Positive attitudes to self, work, and to further learning.

Alpern (1991) suggests that school and community partnerships are an important feature of effective

educational programs for at-risk students. Through the intervention action of the Integrated Occupational Program, IOP, core academic courses and practical arts were taught to provide an enhanced environment for instruction and learning. Students were motivated to earn a certificate of achievement and to complete the graduate achievement profile upon successful completion of the program.

Glass (1993) stresses the need for a national program funded by the federal government to encourage business participation and investment in schools to provide apprenticeship and training programs. Quoting him, "If youth apprenticeship is to be a national program, there has to be a federal role." (Glass, 1993:7)

Solution and Strategy

After reviewing the research of various solution strategies presented, the practicum author's opinion is that Grubb's (1993) solution for integrating academic and vocational education would be the best strategy for this problem at the site school. Grubb (1993) stated that counseling departments are seriously understaffed and that many students lack guidance in selecting career

paths and academic choices. His strategy would be to have each student select a major in the ninth or tenth grade, to map out a career path, to provide a mentor, to provide shadowing experiences and career enrichment, and to use the cluster approach of integrated instruction with the same vocational and academic teachers for the three- or four-year program. However, due to financial resources, staffing allocations, and the lack of the clustering scheduling, Grubb's strategy is not feasible for implementation at the targeted site at this time.

The writer reviewed other research strategies and selected a two-fold approach as the primary solution strategy that will be incorporated to implement at the site school for the targeted group.

The first approach will be to identify the at-risk students who have been placed into the DCT cooperative program. An at-risk school team will be organized to meet weekly to discuss attendance and grade reports and to design motivational enrichment plans for the targeted students to achieve academic success. This strategy is supported by the success of students in the study completed by the North Carolina Department of Vocational Education (1989) on how to better serve at-risk youth.

The second approach will be to build students' self esteem and motivation based on the research of Alpern (1991), Bishop (1988), North Carolina State Dept. of Education, (1989), Irvine, (1985), Michigan Board of Education, (1986). These authors reported that self esteem and motivation were increased by providing the following: volunteers to serve as mentors and tutors; enrichment activities including field trips, shadowing experiences, and guest speakers; and one-on-one specific career counseling and subject-area tutors. Through informal speeches and inservice sessions at the Chamber of Commerce meetings and other community club and service organizations, community and business leaders will be asked to participate in this strategy plan during the implementation period.

By using community employers as advisors and mentors, the author hopes to duplicate Bishop's (1988) success in helping at-risk students see the value of acquiring a strong foundation of basic skills; emphasize both school success and job success; to improve communication between the school and the employers; and build a strong base for job placement and occupational training.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Preparation for Implementation

The practicum author met with the school principal, the full-service school staff, the Seminole County Dividends Community Involvement representative, the Chamber of Commerce, and the school site at-risk team prior to the twelve-week implementation period. Knowing that the importance of ownership in the solution strategy by all participants was an important part, the mission was to get all of the employers and business community members/mentors, as well as the students' parents to buy into the mentoring strategy to address the problems. Plans were discussed and finalized with all parties, and the at-risk team was informed of their role in the project. A letter with a mentor program permission form (Appendix C:47) and the mentor program student profile (Appendix D:49) was sent to parents explaining the mentor program. To help the mentors and the at-risk team monitor the behavior of each student, a weekly journal was kept by each student listing class activities, events, work schedule, class attendance and grades.

Mentors were asked to monitor the journals and to recognize the students for their excellent attitude, behavior, attendance and grades. Each student's goal was to earn a weekly incentive prize for attendance and grades.

Timeline for Implementation

Week 1 The Dividends/Community Service Representative conducted a training session for the mentors of this implementation listing district guidelines, procedures, and activities for the mentoring program. This proved to be a very valuable resource because many of the mentors needed to be briefed on the district policies and procedures to be used for off-campus activities.

Week 2 Students were introduced to the mentoring program, and each student completed the Introduction sheet for the mentor (Appendix E:51). Mentors were asked to complete the Introduction sheet (Appendix F:53) to be given to their assigned student.

Week 3 A breakfast meeting was planned for students to meet mentors. At this breakfast meeting the data on the introduction sheets was shared by student and mentor. A report card depicting each student's GPA for the last

grading period and attendance was given to each mentor. Each student and mentor set weekly meeting times and the methods of contact during the week for interaction or special activities.

Week 4 Students shared the week's activities and discussed them with their mentor. The first incentive was earned by students for the week's activities.

Week 5 Progress reports were completed by teachers listing grades, class attendance, and attitude. Conferences were scheduled with mentors and students to discuss these reports. Mentors were involved in some tutoring of students in low subject areas. Also, some students were referred to the school's computer lab for remedial work on needed subjects.

Week 5 Mentors and students devised an individualized educational plan, listing the students goals to have better attendance and a higher GPA in all subjects. Students were given copies of their four-year transcript, listing their rank and class standing. This was beneficial to them to see the importance of the GPA in their individual class ranking. Students were given the opportunity to participate in the vocational student organization (Cooperative Education Clubs of Florida)

district contest. Mentors were asked to participate by helping students study for their contest area and to serve as judges in contest areas.

Week 6 A student shadow day in the mentor's office/business was planned. Students wrote a paper after this visit describing the workplace, the interaction between employees and management. and the workplace work expectations and motivation used.

Week 7 Students studied motivational theories of the work place and the theory of Denning's quality circles. Students listened to guest speakers on total quality management (TQM) and workplace quality production theories and practices.

Week 8 Special hands-on training in the school computer lab began with instruction in word processing and computer literacy. Students used their word processing skills to type an integrated English/DCT assignment to produce a portfolio of selected documents to be critiqued by their mentors.

Week 9 Students continued to work in the computer lab to complete the integrated English/DCT assignment to produce a portfolio of selected documents using their word processing skills.

Week 10 A field trip to an entertainment area was planned to reward those students who met the expectations and goals of the mentoring program.

Week 11 An employer, parent, student, mentor night was planned. Students planned the program and hosted the event. Trophies from the vocational student organization (Cooperative Education Clubs of Florida) were displayed as well as the student portfolios.

Week 12 Mentors were asked to complete the student status form (Appendix G:55). Results from grades, attendance, and student status forms were tabulated, and the records were compared with the previous grading period. A final meeting was held with the school principal, the full-service school staff, the Dividends Community Involvement representative, the Chamber of Commerce, and the school site at-risk team to review the implementation program and the results.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The practicum author used three different means of evaluating the success of the employer student/mentor program and at-risk teams in resolving the problem of low DCT student completion rate. These evaluation methods were tailored to each objective as outlined below:

1. After 12 weeks of participation in the targeted one-on-one employer/student mentor program with at-risk teams, the student completion rate was increased by 50 percent so that 100 percent of the target students completed their DCT training. This objective was measured by comparing completion data for DCT students for the 1992-1993 school year to completion data for DCT students in the 1993-1994 school year. Since objective one was to have 100 percent of the students complete their DCT training, objective one was met.

2. Fifty percent of the target students improved their grade point average by 5 percent or more by improving grades in one or more classes so that 80 percent of the target group had a 2.0 grade point average and a C or higher in all academic and DCT classes. This objective

was measured by a comparison of the target students' grades on the report cards for the grading period prior to implementation and target students' grades and grade point average on the report cards at the end of the implementation period. The criteria used to determine a C grade was an average of 75 percent. Since objective two required 80 percent of the target students to achieve a 2.0 or better grade point average, this objective was also met.

3. Only 37.5 percent of the target students improved their attendance rates by 100 percent so that a total of 62.5 percent of the target students attended school regularly and had no more than two absences during the 12-week implementation period. This objective was measured by compiling pre- and post-attendance data. Since objective three required 80 percent (13) of the target students to not miss more than two absences during the implementation period, this objective was not met.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

With the emphasis in national events concerning community involvement in schools, business partnerships, and apprenticeships and increased technical training needed to encourage students to stay in school, the practicum author has recommended the continuation of the one-on-one mentor program, the solution strategy, with the monitoring of the GPA and attendance of each student beginning in the fall semester, for early intervention, rather than beginning in the spring semester. There was a positive effect on student GPAs as well as an increased attendance pattern for the target group of students (Appendix H:57). However, since attendance seems to be one of the critical factors for the academic success for the at-risk student, the practicum author suggests that the school seriously look at attendance reforms and policy changes and begin early intervention teams when an increased absence pattern occurs.

As the DCT students met with their mentors, they began to "buy into" their mentor's leadership role in the community, and they began to see the importance of

schooling and education needed in the real world. Many students became involved in community affairs, attending Chamber of Commerce meetings/social functions, or other types of business networking interactions with their mentors. The mentors assisted their students with Federal tax forms, scholarship applications, Pell Grant forms, ACT and SAT applications, and other financial aid forms. This employer/student mentor program had such positive outcomes for the DCT students at the site school that it has prompted other schools with DCT programs to use components of the program for next year.

Much restructuring of school programs is being done now, and the vocational director has expressed an desire to use the program as a pilot for the upcoming school year. The practicum author has also been a part of the writing team for the Florida Department of Education's restructuring plan for the DCT program. The practicum author's survey of 100 DCT coordinators in the state of Florida was presented to the Diversified State Technical Committee, a state advisory committee made up of representatives from diversified businesses, as well as to the Department of Education's DCT restructuring team. The Department of Education has asked the practicum

author to present the outcomes of this practicum research at the Florida Vocational Association Conference in August, 1994. Furthermore, the practicum author was awarded a regional cash award in May, 1994, by Alpha Delta Kappa, an honorary international sorority for women educators, for research concerning at-risk students in the state of Florida. The practicum author will write a paper describing the program, the application methods, and the outcomes for publication in the Alpha Delta Kappa national magazine. Other articles will be sent to other professional publications in hopes that other educators might benefit from the information.

In recommending the solution strategy, the following points must be pondered. First, the attendance may have been improved by the incentive of not having to take the final exam if a student missed no more than two days per semester. However, this incentive was in place for the first semester, and the attendance did not reflect that the students were interested in participating in this policy. (Appendix H:57). The statistics strongly suggest that the mentors may have had a greater role in encouraging their students to attend school regularly (Appendix I:59). And, because of the students attending

school regularly, each student showed improvement and increases in the GPA from the previous semester. Therefore, the one-on-one mentor and at-risk teams must be recommended as one way to increase student attendance and academic performance. Increasing the community's involvement in our schools by the use of mentors is seen as a solution to many of the problems that schools face today. As research has shown, the one-on-one approach has a positive effect on the at-risk student, the potential drop out. With a employer/mentor program, the school can team up for success with the community.

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Appendix A

DCT Program Information Survey

DCT PROGRAM INFORMATION SURVEY

Please return ASAP to:
Mary A. Cragar, Seminole High School
2701 Ridgewood Avenue
Sanford, FL 32773-4999

____1. In your school for this year, has the DCT Program enrollment (a) increased (b) decreased (c) stayed about the same (d) lost program(s) (e) gained program(s).

____2. Is your school DCT Program for (a) coordinator-approved DCT students only (b) DCT and at-risk students (c) drop-out prevention students (d) DCT and ESE students (e) students with no career goals or no specific employment skills.

____3. Does your school DCT Program have (a) inter-disciplinary learning (b) Tech Prep (c) OJT for specialized technical programs (d) job internship or job shadowing (e) other_____

____4. Does your DCT Program have (a) DCT II students in a separate classes (b) DCT II students in combined I/II classes (c) no provision for second year students to complete (d) other_____

____5. What is the greatest problem that you have in dealing with the "general" DCT student? (a) school attendance (b) attitude (c) respect for employers and adults (d) lack of 1.5 GPA for academic progress

____6. What is the greatest problem(s) you have incurred placing DCT students in career-related jobs: (a) paid jobs are not available for student career goals (b) students do not have high-tech skills needed for specific job placement (c) students do not have general academic ability and skills for placement (d) employers are unwilling to hire students under 18 because of liability (e) none of the above drastically affect my program.

____7. Does your school DCT Program affiliate with CECF for (a) all enrolled DCT students (b) all DCT school officers (c) students who wish to be in club (d) other_____

____8. Does your school DCT Program participate in CECF (a) District activities (b) All or most District and State contests only.

____9. Have any of your students received a Gold Seal Scholarship in your DCT Program? (a) yes (b) no

____10. How many Gold Seal Scholarship completers did you have for the 1992-1993 school year?

____11. What PERCENTAGE of students in your TOTAL SCHOOL POPULATION are enrolled in DCT Program?

____12. Were any of your DCT Training Stations cited for violations of the Child Labor Laws? (a) yes (b) no

____13. If yes, list the number of instances.

____14. Are you teaching a class in addition to DCT? (a) yes (b) no

____15. If yes, list the class(es)_____

____16. What percentage of students enrolled in DCT last year DID NOT stay in school and complete the program?

____17. How many students are enrolled NOW in your LARGEST DCT related Instruction class?

____18. Does your program have computers available for student use? (a) school lab only (b) 5 or more computer stations (c) three or fewer computers stations (d) no access to computers and equipment.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Appendix B

Florida Department of Education Report

01/24/93 — FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION — FISCAL YEAR 1990-91
REPORT ID - VPPRPT3D — DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL, ADULT, AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION — PAGE 00010
BREAKDOWN PERCENTS BY CIP, STATEWIDE

DISTRICT: ALL — SERVICE AREA AND TITLE: 10 DIVERSIFIED
SCHOOL: ALL

**** DESCRIPTORS ********** DESCRIPTORS ********** DESCRIPTORS ********** DESCRIPTORS **********

STUDENTS ENROLLED:	52752	NON-RES. ALIENS:	4612		
STUDENTS COMPLETED:	3229	ECON. DISADV.:	12721	BASIC SKILLS TEST	
STUDENTS PLACED:	6294	ACAD. DISADV.:	3064		
JOB PREPARATORY:	34392	DISABLED:	747	PASSED:	145
SUPPLEMENTAL:	29	DISP. HMMAKERS:	102	FAILED:	180
EXP. PA. MISC.:	18228	SINGLE PARENTS:	376	NOT TAKEN:	329
APPRENTICESHIP:	113	L.E.P.:	2114	NOT REQ'D:	52098

ENROLLED BY SEX BY RACE (% & COUNTS):

	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	INDIAN
FEMALES:	46.9	57.5	24.3	17.3	0.7	0.2
	24732	14232	6007	4275	171	47
MALES:	53.1	57.1	21.8	20.1	0.8	0.2
	28020	15994	6107	5637	220	62

***** INDICATORS ********** INDICATORS ********** INDICATORS ********** INDICATORS **********

	RATE	ST. AVE.	TARGET	FLAGS
COMPLETER PLACEMENT RATE:	98.4%	%	%	
PRODUCTIVITY RATE:	23.5%	%	%	
COMPLETION RATE:	9.4%	%	N/A	
LEAVER RATE:	16.2%	%	N/A	
LEAVER PLACEMENT RATE:	95.2%	%	N/A	
TARGET POPULATION COMP. PLACEMENT RATE:	97.2%	%	%	
TARGET POPULATION PRODUCTIVITY RATE:	14.9%	%	%	

FULL-TIME/FULL-QUARTER EARNINGS:

SEX/RACE TERMINATION BREAKDOWN(%):

FEMALES -	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	INDIAN
COMPLETING:	10.1	71.7	16.6	10.3	1.0	0.3
LEAVING:	16.3	64.2	21.7	13.2	0.8	0.1
WITHDRAW'G:	60.1	59.1	19.8	20.3	0.6	0.1
REMAINING:	13.5	63.1	24.1	12.0	0.5	0.3

MALES -	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	INDIAN
COMPLETING:	8.7	72.9	13.2	13.0	0.6	0.3
LEAVING:	16.2	67.3	17.5	13.7	1.3	0.2
WITHDRAW'G:	62.1	60.2	18.2	20.8	0.7	0.2
REMAINING:	13.0	67.2	17.5	14.1	0.9	0.3

SEX/RACE PLACEMENT BREAKDOWN(%):

FEMALES -	TOTAL	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	INDIAN
TOT. PLACED:	19.1	70.5	16.5	12.0	0.8	0.2
MILITARY:	0.3	74.4	20.9	4.7	0.0	0.0
POSTSEC ED:	7.3	74.5	17.9	6.6	0.8	0.2
RELATED JOB:	11.6	67.9	15.6	15.5	0.9	0.2
MALES -						
TOT. PLACED:	17.5	71.4	14.4	13.0	1.0	0.1
MILITARY:	1.4	75.4	16.7	7.1	0.8	0.0
POSTSEC ED:	5.4	76.1	14.6	7.2	1.9	0.2
RELATED JOB:	10.7	68.5	13.9	16.8	0.6	0.1

SPECIAL POPULATIONS:

PERCENT OF ENROLLED:		TOTAL	MIL	POSTSEC	REL.JOB
ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	COMPLETING:	4.0			
	PLACED:	8.2	0.7	2.4	5.1
ACADEMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	COMPLETING:	16.0			
	PLACED:	27.9	1.5	8.7	17.7
DISABLED	COMPLETING:	4.2			
	PLACED:	6.5	0.0	1.4	5.1
LIMITED ENGL. PROFICIENCY	COMPLETING:	3.1			
	PLACED:	15.1	0.1	3.7	11.2
DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS	COMPLETING:	44.6			
	PLACED:	32.3	0.0	3.1	29.2
SINGLE PARENT	COMPLETING:	23.5			
	PLACED:	32.6	1.8	10.9	19.9

Appendix C

Letter/Permission Form

Seminole County Public Schools
SEMINOLE HIGH SCHOOL
2701 Ridgewood Avenue
Sanford, Florida 32773-4999
(407) 322-4352

Gretchen M. Schapker, Principal

January 28, 1994

Dear Parents:

We are pleased to inform you that your student has been recommended to participate in the Seminole County Mentor Program for the DCT Mentor Program at Seminole High School. This program matches a skilled volunteer with a selected student.

This trained volunteer will work with your student on school premises for a minimum of one hour per week. He/she will work on motivating, listening, encouraging, tutoring, setting goals and role modeling. Occasionally, the student and mentor may leave the school grounds for approved educational purposes.

The student/mentor match is a joint effort requiring commitment from the student, teacher, school, family and the volunteer. The extent of your commitment to the program will ensure your student's success with the program. Please notify the school when your student will not be attending so that the mentor can reschedule his/her appointed time.

We are pleased your student was selected for this special program. It is yet another effort by the school system to serve our students. If you have any questions, please call the school. The contact person is Mary Cragar, DCT Coordinator, 322-4352, Extension 143.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Schapker

Gretchen M. Schapker
Principal

I give consent for my child _____,
to participate in the Dividend Mentor Program.

_____ _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Please return this form to Mary Cragar, DCT Coordinator, as soon as possible.

Appendix D

Student Profile Part A

MENTOR PROGRAM
STUDENT PROFILE - PART A
1993 - 1994

1. **Student's Name**_____ **Grade**____

2. **Student's Grade Point Average for the last school year**____

3. **Total number of student absences for the last school year** _____

Do you have any information that would help the Mentor/Motivator with this student?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

STUDENT'S SCHEDULE
(INCLUDE LUNCH)

Appendix E

Student Introduction Form

THE MENTOR PROGRAM
AN INTRODUCTION OF MYSELF TO MY MENTOR

Hello,
I am (name)_____I like to be called_____

I am (age)____years old and in the _____grade. I attend_____

school. I live with my _____at (address) _____

_____(phone)_____

(city)_____ FL (zip)_____

THE SUBJECTS I TAKE ARE

1._____ 2._____

3._____ 4._____

5._____ 6._____

OTHER ACTIVITIES I PARTICIPATE IN:

_____

_____

The best thing I can say about myself is_____
_____

One thing I would like to change or improve about myself is_____
_____
_____

When I think about the future, the goals I would like to reach are_____
_____
_____

A mentor can help by_____
_____

Appendix F

Mentor Introduction Form

THE MENTOR PROGRAM
AN INTRODUCTION OF MYSELF TO MY STUDENT

Hello,

I am (name) _____ **I like to be called** _____

I work at _____ **My job title is** _____

My work address is _____ **(phone)** _____

(city) _____ **FL (zip)** _____

MY JOB DUTIES ARE:

_____

_____

_____

OTHER ACTIVITIES I PARTICIPATE IN:

PROFESSIONAL **IN THE COMMUNITY**

_____

_____

Some personal information about myself I would like to share:

_____

_____

_____

_____

How I got where I am today: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The reason I would like to be a mentor: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix G

Student Status Form

MENTOR PROGRAM
STUDENT STATUS

STUDENT NAME_____ MENTOR_____ ____

SCHOOL_____

GRADE_____

Before Mentor Matchup	After Mentor Matchup
G.P.A._____	G.P.A._____
Attendance_____	Attendance_____
Attitude_____	Attitude_____
Appearance_____	Appearance_____
COMMENT:_____	**COMMENT:**_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

APPENDIX H

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

STUDENT PERFORMANCE
FALL SEMESTER - GRADES
OF DCT STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS AT-RISK

Grade	Scale	No. of Students	%
A	3.6 - 4-0	0	.0
B	2.6 - 3.5	3	18.75
C	1.6 - 2.5	9	56.25
D	.75 - 1.5	3	18.75
F	*Below .75	1	6.25
	Totals	16	100.0

*Reflects Incomplete recorded at the end of the semester if student did not take semester exam or complete classwork until a later date

* * * * * * * * * * *

STUDENT PERFORMANCE
FALL SEMESTER - STUDENT ABSENCES
FOR DCT STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS AT-RISK

Absences	No. of Students	%
*2 or less absences	4	25.0
3 - 6 absences	3	18.75
7 - 10 absences	3	18.75
11 - 15 absences	3	18.75
16 - 20 absences	2	12.50
over 20 absences	1	6.25
Total	16	100.0

*Exemption from fall semester exams granted if student had 2 or fewer absences in the class

APPENDIX I

STUDENT PERFORMANCE

STUDENT PERFORMANCE
SPRING SEMESTER - GRADES
FOR DCT STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS AT-RISK
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Grade	Scale	No. of Students	%
A	3.6 - 4-0	0	.0
B	2.6 - 3.5	6	37.5
C	1.6 - 2.5	7	43.75
D	.75 - 1.5	3	18.75
F	Below .75	0	.0
	Totals	16	100.0

* * * * * * * * * * *

STUDENT PERFORMANCE
SPRING SEMESTER - STUDENT ABSENCES
FOR DCT STUDENTS IDENTIFIED AS AT-RISK
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Absences	No. of Students	%
*2 or less absences	10	62.5
3 - 6 absences	3	18.75
7 - 10 absences	1	6.25
11 - 15 absences	3	18.75
16 - 20 absences	0	.0
over 20 absences	0	.0
Total	16	100.0

*Exemption from spring semester exams granted if student had 2 or fewer absences in the class